

The remainder of the book has this rather mixed approach of discussion and dogma. The discussion of natural law and utilitarianism is on the whole helpful, the conclusion that 'utilitarianism turns out to be untenable' is a bit bald. The chapters on integrity, respect and confidentiality follow a similar pattern and the three chapters dealing with 'problems of life and death' consider euthanasia, abortion, genetic counselling and care of the handicapped newborn.

The book works to the extent that it tells Catholic nurses how to keep faith. More problematic is the question: 'How do Catholic nurses act towards those who do not share their beliefs?' This latter issue is, to my mind, of concern in nursing ethics if we are to confront the problem of the potential for the imposition of value systems on our patients. If the work were entitled *Ethics in Catholic Nursing Practice*, this reviewer would be a good deal happier with this addition to the ever-increasing literature on nursing ethics.

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Confronting AIDS – Update 1988

Institute of Medicine and National
Academy of Sciences, 239 pages,
Washington DC, USA, £13.75, 1988.

This is an update on the 1986 report into the public health issues around HIV and AIDS. It is written by a joint committee of the American Institute of Medicine and National Academy of

Sciences. It focusses on the conclusions of the earlier report, the need for a national strategy and a national commission on AIDS and HIV, supported at presidential level with a budget to do a federal job. It is significant that none of the recommendations have seen any political acknowledgement.

It is an important reference book for this reason, and for others. There is a concise summary of the committee's deliberations at the beginning, a user-friendly contents and index and all the references, some obsolete, at the end of each chapter. It is a time-saving reference for anyone wishing to learn about AIDS.

There is a short commentary on important public health issues around HIV. The editors almost ignore the conflicting attitudes but make the right suggestions. There are recommendations to target health education through television, to use wide-scale advertising to take the message to the young, and to evaluate the educational impact on heterosexual women and men. The government is urged to get the message across – with 'properly funded educational programmes', effectively and explicitly. Another reminder of what has not been done, both in Britain and the United States.

Between the necessarily repetitive, emerge original points and encouraging suggestions. The committee is strongly in favour of voluntary testing, as against mandatory, or anonymous programmes of testing which are expensive. Above all else, they emphasise individual counselling to reduce risk whenever the risk is greatest. The gross inadequacy of federal efforts to reduce HIV transmission amongst drug users they say, 'is now the most serious deficiency

in controlling HIV infection'. They want an end to the climate of discrimination which clouds public health policy and support a federal statute to outlaw AIDS-related discrimination.

Update 1988 argues for increased standards of privacy, informed consent and confidentiality of antibody test results. The laws on informed consent, confidentiality and disclosure vary in different states of America. The committee believes that there should be legal sanctions for negligent disclosure and exceptions to confidentiality must have a solid basis in public health policy. Secure hospital medical-record keeping is an achievable aim and would make it possible to trace unauthorised disclosures. As the committee is strongly in favour of voluntary testing because it may affect behavioural change, there is over-reliance on the 'need to know who is infected' policy. It is not surprising to find argument on the duty to warn others when an individual is infected, and a belief that contact tracing can be useful. However, it is disturbing to see half-baked comments on ethical dilemmas. The authors postulate: 'Directly warning ... may not be required ... Informing the police or public authorities might ... be reasonable alternatives'.

Update 1988 does not profess to be any more original than the original authorities. Nevertheless this is a very important report. It boldly says where government needs to go and boldly has not been.

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